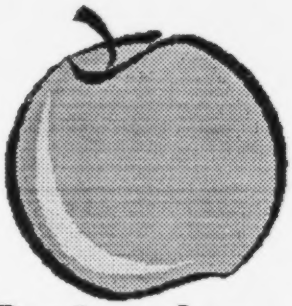

Partnering for Health

Department of Health & Community Services

Building a Healthier Future

Development of a Health Charter for Newfoundland and Labrador

A Public Discussion Paper
February 26, 2003

103-05598/

Foreword

I am seeking your feedback on the development of a health charter for our province. In the coming weeks the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador hopes to endorse an important document which will outline commitments regarding the health and community services system to the people of the province. To ensure the health charter is meaningful and relevant, we are seeking input from citizens.

Government made a commitment to a health charter during the Throne Speech of March 2002. *Healthier Together,* our provincial strategic health plan, further defined a health charter as a statement of intent. The charter has two purposes: to ensure the people of the province know what they can expect from the health and community services system; and to identify the responsibilities which people have for their own health and well-being. It is intended to promote good relationships among all individuals involved with the system.

We need your help in order to create a health charter that reflects what is most important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. As a starting point, I am pleased to provide this short paper for your discussion and reaction.

I look forward to hearing from you and would like to thank you in advance for your interest and input.

GERALD SMITH, MHA
District of Port au Port
Minister of Health and Community Services
February 2003

Introduction

The development of a provincial health charter - *Building a Healthier Future* - will provide the residents of the province with a better understanding of both the philosophy and goals of the health and community services system, as well as the shared responsibility that we all have for furthering the health and well-being of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Government is committed to providing high quality health and community services to individuals, families and communities as well as healthy public policy that promotes health and well-being. We need to do this in partnership to build the best possible system of services and supports.

This province is not alone in its struggle to keep up with the high demands facing the health and community services system. In order to ensure the sustainability of the services that people value and need we must work together to reach our common goals. *Health Forums 2001* was a valuable step in identifying the concerns and priorities of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. *Healthier Together: A Strategic Health Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador* outlined Government's commitment to the people of the Province. The health charter - *Building a Healthier Future* - will establish what is most important to us all and what we can expect from each other.

Building a Healthier Future
A Health Charter for Newfoundland and Labrador

As a resident of the province, you can expect:

1. A clean and safe environment that promotes health and well-being;
2. Public policies that are sensitive to possible impacts on the health of the population;
3. A partnership approach that empowers individuals, families and communities to take charge of their health and well-being;
4. A publicly funded health and community services system that prioritizes need, supports health and uses money wisely;
5. Population-based approaches to health, such as immunization, that protect people from major health risks;
6. Regular reporting on the health of the population and the effectiveness of the health and community services system;
7. Value and support for family/informal caregiving;
8. Services that are delivered with respect and courtesy, and that are free from discrimination;
9. Opportunity for input about how the system is designed and operated;
10. Reasonable access to frequently used health services that are close to where people live;
11. Continuous improvement in the timely provision of necessary health and community services;
12. Competent and ethical health providers working in the public interest;
13. Respect for personal privacy and appropriate control of one's personal health information;
14. Information on and involvement by individuals in all decisions about their own health and health care.

Our Shared Responsibility

The highest quality health and well-being are achieved when individuals, families and communities are actively involved. Personal choice is an important factor influencing health - this reality highlights the shared responsibility of people and the system in the promotion of better health outcomes. Collaboration between the health and community services system and individuals will make a real difference in overall health and well-being.

To the greatest extent possible, we all need to:

1. Practice healthy behaviours such as physical activity and wholesome eating;
2. Educate ourselves about important health matters;
3. Use the health and community services system wisely to ensure our health and social needs are addressed;
4. Become involved in health decisions that affect us, our families and communities;
5. Find opportunities to become actively involved in our community.

Conclusion

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador seeks your input as an important step in the development of a health charter for the province. It is only through your involvement that we will have a health charter that is a true reflection of the priorities of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We encourage you to tell us what you think. Please write, e-mail or go to our web site and give us your feedback. A feedback form has been provided with this document for your use.

Feedback Request

We encourage you to provide feedback on the development of a health charter as outlined in this paper. If you would like additional background information, please review *Healthier Together* on our web site - www.gov.nf.ca/health/strategichealthplan. Please respond by April 30, 2003.

Write us: *using regular mail*	Health Charter Development Policy Development Division Department of Health and Community Services P.O. Box 8700 St. John's NL A1B 4J6
E-mail:	strategichealthplan@gov.nf.ca
Toll-free:	1-866-248-9662
Fax:	(709) 729-6737
Visit our web site:	www.gov.nf.ca/health/publications

General Information:

Gender: ❑ Male ❑ Female

Who are you?
- ❑ General Public
- ❑ Advocacy Group
- ❑ Union
- ❑ Employer
- ❑ Other (please specify) _____

Age:
- ❑ 18-24
- ❑ 25-34
- ❑ 35-44
- ❑ 45-64
- ❑ 65+

OVER .....

Your comments, please:

1. Is the development of a health charter a good idea? Why or why not?

2. What are the potential benefits of a health charter from your perspective?

3. What other key issues need to be added to the health charter?

4. Comments on specific health charter statements?